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Counternarcotics Campaign Planning
A Basis for Success or a Malaise for the Military?

A Monograph
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Infantry

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Second Term AY 91-92

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Counternarcotics Campaign Planning: A Basis For Success or a Malaise For the Military?

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)
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7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
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8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

See Attached

14. SUBJECT TERMS
Vietnam
Counternarcotics
War on Drugs
Drug War
Weinberger Doctrine

15. NUMBER OF PAGES
49

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	Unlimited

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This monograph examines the validity of the comparison between the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict and the ongoing war on drugs. With the implosion of Soviet-styled communism, many American have come to view illicit drug use and the violence it fosters as the greatest threat to the U.S. Since the mid-80's, the U.S. Government has enacted legislation and adopted a strategy to include military support in this war effort. Some polemicists and political scientists have been critical of the militarization of U.S. programs, and compared them to the U.S. experience in Vietnam.

The monograph first establishes the linkage between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. In doing so, the monograph relies on the classical theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, whose trinitarian model and center of gravity concept are essential to this preparation. For doctrinal consonance with Clausewitz' model, the monograph uses the Weinberger Doctrine on "The Uses of Military Power," as well as TRADOC PAM 11-9 and FM 100-5. The next two sections dissect both the U.S, involvement in Vietnam and the war on drugs using the theoretical and doctrinal framework previously laid out.

The monograph concludes that there is a sound basis to compare U.S. involvement in Vietnam with the war on drugs. U.S. strategic thinking in the war on drugs remains flawed. The implications for failing to address the true center of gravity of the drug war--domestic demand for illicit narcotics--may be disastrous for the nation. Fortunately, senior U.S. military leaders remain steadfastly opposed to expanding the military's role in the war on drugs.

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SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Title of Monograph: Counternarcotics Campaign Planning--A Basis for Success or a Malaise for the Military?

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Accepted this 15th day of May 1992

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The implosion of Soviet-style communism over the past six years has eliminated the foundation of forty-five years of Cold War planning. The demise of the comfortable paradigm of East-West confrontation, too often viewed by the United States in stark ideological terms, has unveiled a "realpolitik" view of international affairs. This realpolitik reveals reborn nationalism to be rising in many countries worldwide. In some countries, irridentist nationalism presents a serious threat to peace and democratization. In other countries, trans-national economic interests confront rising nationalism, resulting in a perception by these populations that their nation's government cannot manage its economy. Almost inevitably then, economic protectionism asserts itself as another variant of rising nationalism.

Each of these nationalist tendencies, irridentism and protectionism, bodes ill for regional stability. Nevertheless, they are the natural products of the concluded Cold War. The rise of irridentism among formerly suppressed peoples is not surprising and may lead to internecine border wars in any number of world regions. Likewise, the disappearance of the powerful Soviet menace must be expected to loosen the ties which bind western allies, especially regarding economic protectionism.

Neither of these nationalist tendencies appears to

threaten vital U.S. interests now or in the near future. Irridentism tends to be regionally localized far from U.S. shores. Protectionism will likely continue to be addressed diplomatically and electorally. Towards what threat, then, can the United States focus her military forces?

Coincident with the implosion of Soviet communism, many Americans began to assess the "state of the union" in periodicals and on talk shows. The explosion of violent crime in America was highlighted in many media forums. Much of the violent crime has been accurately attributed to expanding illegal drug operations. By the mid-1980's, a well developed cocaine trafficking network was in operation. It had evolved in the 1970's, with its source primarily in the South American Andean nations of Columbia, Peru and Bolivia. The inward focus of Americans (another by-product of the Cold War) led more of them, by late 1989, to label illegal drugs "as the number-one threat to the country."[1] It is primarily against the cocaine cartels of these Andean nations that the U.S. Government has directed its armed forces to operate.

At the governmental level, President Reagan, and later President Bush, committed ever increasing resources towards countering the drug threat. These resources came in many forms--from a national "drug czar", to directing a greater role for the U.S. military both in Latin America's Andean nations and interdicting drug shipments by air and sea. The means by which the U.S. is approaching the drug problem

continue to be debated widely in this country. The expansion of the U.S. military's role in what the President and the media have dubbed, "the War on Drugs," garnishes a huge share of the debate. Some polemicists and professionals have compared the U.S. approach to this undeclared "war on drugs" to a similarly unsuccessful effort in Vietnam a quarter century ago.

This monograph shall examine the validity of this comparison. I intend to identify the theoretical linkage between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war as well as highlight the tenets of the Weinberger Doctrine. I expect to show how the probability of success in securing U.S. strategic aims by direct military means is increased when this linkage exists and the tenets are met. I shall then utilize the case history of the Second Indochina War (Vietnam) to illustrate the plausibility of the conclusion drawn from theory and doctrine. Then, using the same criteria, I shall analyze the "war" on drugs. I shall accompany my conclusions regarding this comparison with implications for the conduct of the war on drugs.

SECTION II. THEORETICAL AND DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

The classical theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, established a model for the conduct of war. In the concluding pages of book one, chapter one of On War, Clausewitz laid down the

model's foundation. First, he stated, "war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means."[2] Second, he postulated that war is always dominated by the interaction of three dominant tendencies, "primordial violence,...the play of chance...within which the creative spirit may roam, and... policy, which makes [war] subject to reason alone."[3] Clausewitz proceeded, within the context of these two cornerstones, to develop his theory for war.

The first of Clausewitz' cornerstones demands a "far-reaching act of judgment" from a nation's political and military leadership.[4] Success in war is more likely when the nation's leaders have clearly formulated the political aims for which they will commit their country's resources. This judgment is the strategic level of war which ought to provide the strategic vision for war prosecution.[5]

Clausewitz states that the expenditure of resources by either opponent in war is related directly to the importance of the political aims on each side.[6] These aims are the product of the interaction of primordial violence, reason, and chance--the three dominant tendencies within each nation. That is to say, the interaction which exists in every nation among its people (economically, socially, politically, and informationally), its government, and its armed forces results in a dynamic tension whose product acts "like an object suspended between three magnets."[7] The conditions

within which these dominant tendencies interact are rarely the same within each adversarial nation, so that uncertainty intrudes upon the process. Each nation remains uncertain as to the other's "strength of will,... character and abilities."[8] These uncertainties regarding the product of this dynamic tension within a given nation, and the impact of that product in motivating the strategic aims of that nation, sow uncertainty regarding the level of effort to be made by an adversarial nation. Nevertheless, a nation's political and senior military leaders must articulate their strategic war aims. Yet these aims should remain constrained by what a nation's people will support and by what its armed forces can achieve.[9]

From these political aims, which are at the heart of strategic vision, the nation's military must deduce operational level objectives and develop a plan for a campaign or major operation which will attain those strategic war aims. According to FM 100-5, "a campaign is a series of joint actions designed to attain a strategic objective, while the coordinated action of large forces in a single phase of a campaign is a major operation."[10] The campaign (or major operation) provides the linkage between the strategic war aim and the operational level commander who has been allocated the resources to wage war.[11] In the formulation of the campaign plan, the operational level commander faces three issues:

> (1) What military condition must be produced...to achieve the strategic goal?
> (2) What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?
> (3) How should the resources... be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?[12]

Essential to answering these questions in the design of a campaign is the analysis which identifies the enemy center of gravity.

FM 100-5 defines the center of gravity as "that characteristic, capability, or locality from which the force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight."[13] Clausewitz first labeled this term and refined it to mean "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. This is the point against which all our energies should be directed."[14] Later in book eight, Clausewitz ties this notion of center of gravity to his first principle of operational planning, "that the ultimate substance of enemy strength must be traced back to the fewest possible sources, and ideally to one alone."[15] Destruction of the enemy center of gravity should increase a nation's probability of achieving its strategic war aims.

Once an enemy's center of gravity is determined, the operational level commander establishes the military conditions within which tactical engagements will be fought. Successful tactical engagements may offer opportunities for operational exploitation and the rapid attainment of the nation's strategic war aims. With rapid victory in mind,

Clausewitz added:

> no conquest can be carried out too quickly, and that to spread it over a longer period than the minimum needed to complete it makes it not less difficult, but more.[16]

The waste of time by a stronger nation may forfeit "special advantages" to the weaker side, and ultimately render success, by that stronger nation, impossible.[17]

Turning to our own time, Clausewitz' trinitarian theory survives in the context of an ongoing national debate about the use of U.S. military power. Coming to grips with this issue several years ago, former Secretary of Defense Weinberger asked himself a very Clausewitz-like question,

> Under what circumstances and by what means does... [our nation] reach the... decision that the use of military force is necessary to protect our interests or to carry out our national policy?"[18]

The tenets with which Mr. Weinberger responded are, like his question, very Clausewitzian. The commitment of U.S. military forces must:

> 1. be to secure vital national strategic aims,
> 2. be with adequate resources to achieve the strategic aims,
> 3. be to achieve clearly defined political and military objectives,
> 4. include a continual reassessment of the objectives sought and the size, composition, and disposition of committed forces,
> 5. be reasonably assured of congressional support and the support of the American people,
> 6. assure that the commitment of U.S. forces into combat is a last resort.[19]

The first tenet corresponds to Clausewitz' concept that the

decision to wage war requires a "far reaching act of judgment" by a nation's political and military leadership.[20] Indeed, Clausewitz goes so far as to say that no nation should prosecute a war without first possessing a clear understanding of its aims and "how... [the nation] intends to conduct ...[the war]."[21] The second and fourth tenets address Clausewitz' notion that the "scale of a nation's effort" and the forces available "must be adequate" to achieve the aims desired.[22] Tenet three correlates directly to Clausewitz' guidance that the war's strategic aim must be linked to its operational conduct.[23] The fifth tenet acknowledges the essential interplay of the three dominant tendencies. Lastly, former Secretary Weinberger's sixth tenet underwrites a fundamental American attitude which can be found in Clausewitz' seminal statement that "war is no pastime... it is a serious means to a serious end."[24] Taken in its U.S. context, this means that U.S. military force will be the final strategic policy course of action adopted by the U.S. Government.

Both Clausewitz and Weinberger are providing important guidance to political and military leaders. Their theoretical concepts and doctrinal ideas tell national leaders to be wary of committing a nation to war. A nation, by their views, should take a systematic and reasoned approach to the decision to wage war. This decision must fully consider the demands of the theoretical and doctrinal tenets discussed

above. In doing so, the nation will increase its probability of success in attaining its strategic war aims because the reasoned dialogue leading to the decision should have addressed the uncertainties of the body politic within that nation.[25] To examine an historical case where this consideration was applied this monograph will dissect the American involvement in Vietnam.

SECTION III. VIETNAM CASE STUDY ILLUSTRATION.

America's vital national interests during four and a half decades of the post-WW II era were tied, inexorably, to the Cold War. They evolved out of George Kennan's 1947 article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," and were reinforced by the "who lost China" debate which followed in the wake of Mao's success in 1949. That policy became known as "Containment," viewed a monolithic communist block bent on the destruction of democracy and world hegemony, and ultimately found expression in NSC 68.[26] An examination of the trinitarian debate concerning U.S. involvement in Vietnam offers a useful way to examine the theoretical admonitions of Clausewitz and Weinberger, as well as how U.S. strategic aims related to operational objectives there.

Overshadowing the pragmatism of Truman's Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, was his Undersecretary, Dean Acheson. Acheson was supported by his persuasive Assistant

for Far Eastern Affairs, Dean Rusk. The invasion of South Korea in June 1950 confirmed this group's belief in monolithic communism. Together these men persuaded President Truman and the U.S. Congress that the civil war in Indochina had "been captured by the [Soviet] Politburo" and was "part of an international war."[27] This was in contravention of 1948 department estimates "that 'the Vietnamese Communists are not subservient' to Kremlin directives."[28] Yet the more current position held sway. As President Truman stated, "we were seeing a pattern in Indochina timed to coincide with the attack in Korea as a challenge to the Western World."[29] In fact, NSC documents 48/2 (Dec '49) and 64 (Feb '50) outlined:

> It is important to U.S. security interests that all practical measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indo-China is a key...and is under immediate threat.[30]

Thus, Truman's Administration established the strategic aim which would dominate the U.S. for nearly half a century.

In fulfilling its strategic policy of worldwide communist containment the Truman administration began military aid to those nations which it viewed as being at risk. This view of *monolithic communism* seems to have led to programs of "instinctive support... everywhere...without much regard for... and...with little knowledge of the Indochina situation."[31] In Indochina this involved the establishment of a U.S. military assistance and advisory group. During the Truman years

this MAAG was primarily responsible for logistic support to the French, as they retained the training and operational missions. By the time of the crisis at Dienbienphu, however, U.S. support grew to providing three-fourths of French costs.[32] Even worse though, the U.S., quite unknowingly, became "tarnished with the same stamp as French colonialism."[33] Nevertheless, this support to France in Indochina was viewed as vital to sustain Western solidarity in a Europe confronting the Soviet threat.[34]

The 1954 French crisis at Dienbienphu triggered the dialogue which would try to match U.S. operational actions with U.S. strategic policy on Indochina. The impending French debacle followed scarcely fourteen months into the Eisenhower Presidency, and less than a year after the U.S. concluded truce talks between South and North Korea. Secretary of State Dulles' preserved the idea of monolithic communism while fretting that the French would default Indochina to the United States.[35] The Joint Chiefs were divided, with Admiral Radford and General Twining favoring strategic bombing support for the French, while General Ridgway opposed any direct military action on the asian mainland. It was at this time, in March 1954, that the army chief of staff stated that "Indochina is devoid of decisive military objectives' and...'would be a serious diversion of limited U.S. capabilities."[36] Nevertheless, other factors weighed into the balance and sustained U.S. policy ties to South

Vietnam.

In the early 1950's, some prominent U.S. citizens had formed favorable impressions of Ngo Dinh Diem, a former and future key leader in South Vietnam. This man, characterized as "an ascetic Catholic steeped in Confucian tradition, a mixture of monk and mandarin," spent over two years in America.[37] Prior to his departure in May 1953, he had befriended Senators Mansfield and Kennedy. Mr. Diem had argued his anti-communist, anti-French colonialist position to each of these Americans and gained vocal allies.[38]

In July 1954, the Soviet brokered Geneva talks over Indochina divided Vietnam, emplaced Ngo Dinh Diem as Prime Minister in the south, and assured French security forces in the south until national elections could be held in July 1956.[39] Over the next ten months "other factors" played an important role in U.S. strategic policy making for Southeast Asia.

Despite their internal division over employing military power to aid the French, the Joint Chiefs opposed any assumption of a larger U.S. presence in South Vietnam. In this opposition, they were affirmed in late 1954 by General J. Lawton Collins whose assessment of Diem declared that he and his government were "hopeless."[40] The State Department's opposition to the military view was seconded by the influential Senator Mansfield. By insisting on support for Diem, Dulles alienated the French, who also viewed Diem as a loser, and triggered their complete withdrawal from Indo-

china earlier than scheduled. President Eisenhower, who seemed to be keenly aware of the necessity for balance among the dominant tendencies of Clausewitz' trinity, would not consider any unilateral U.S. intervention outside of a strong allied coalition or without Congressional support.[41] However, he chose a middle course and continued aid to the Diem government.

Early in 1955, the Eisenhower Administration sought to fulfill strategic policy by assuming responsibility to train the Army of Vietnam (ARVN). Over the next four years, the U.S. MAAG organized and trained ARVN to oppose a conventional invasion from the north. Many of the U.S. advisors sent to Vietnam were not prepared for their MAAG duties. They neither possessed language skills nor did they receive any other training which would familiarize them with Vietnam's history and culture, much less the nature of the struggle. Similarly, counterinsurgency training was ignored. Yet the U.S. MAAG persevered and accomplished its mission, which was to train the ARVN to repel a conventional attack from the north.[42]

Concurrent with this U.S. MAAG presence, the Viet Cong, as a part of phase I-protracted war, organized its insurgent political infrastructure in South Vietnam. The National Liberation Front (NLF), the VC political arm, began operations in the south in 1958. By late 1959, civil and paramilitary forces had proven so ineffective against the expand-

ing, phase II-VC insurgency, that ARVN units were needed to fight it. However, in spite of the widening indications of protracted insurgency war, the U.S. MAAG steadfastly discounted the VC impact in the south. Training for counterinsurgency war was neither the MAAG's mission nor part of the U.S. Army's operational concept for waging war. In Vietnam, as President Kennedy assumed office, U.S. strategic containment policy was linked to the U.S. Army's operational vision of fighting a conventional war to repel communist invaders--not to fight a counterinsurgency war.[43] The U.S. Army failed to understand the true nature of this war.

The arrival of the Kennedy Administration, in early 1961, brought a youthful President with a predisposition to support Diem. This predisposition was reinforced by events prior to his election and early in his administration. President Kennedy had been roughly handled during the election campaign by his opponent for being "soft on Communism". Coupled with his embarrassment at the Bay of Pigs and the bully boy tactics employed against him by Soviet General Secretary Khrushchev in Vienna, JFK was determined to "make ...[American] power credible," and he judged that "Vietnam ...[was] the place" to do it.[44] Additionally, JFK surrounded himself with advisors who generally concurred with him on Vietnam issues. Besides key aides like his brother Robert, Secretary of State Rusk's team, Secretary of Defense McNamara's "whiz kids", and Vice President Johnson headed

the list of "hawks" who agreed that the U.S. must face down monolithic communist hegemony in Southeast Asia. In fact, JFK tended to reinforce this attitude within his entourage by the rough handling he gave to those who disagreed.[45] In spite of the strategic consistency to contain communism in Southeast Asia, operational implementation of this strategic aim remained unclear.

As a former U.S. Senator, JFK was aware of the events and actions of previous administrations in coming to grips with the communist threat in Vietnam. Dissatisfied with the lack of success, he was anxious to take actions which would offer the U.S. more flexible means to respond to this threat. A "flexible response" would require a clear picture of the situation, and a military instrument capable of implementing policy. As the situation was unclear to him, President Kennedy dispatched several advisors and friends to assess the Diem government.

The Maxwell Taylor-Walt Rostow fact-finding mission to Vietnam in October 1961 recommended a gradual increase in U.S. presence. Taylor judged that additional U.S. aviation, logistic, and advisory personnel and equipment would stiffen the resolve of ARVN, while raising U.S. participation to one of "limited partnership."[46] This recommendation was not received well by the JCS and Secretary McNamara. They felt that Taylor's proposals could not be decisive, so recommended that six U.S. divisions be sent to Vietnam.[47] The

conventional operational concept of massive firepower and mobility dominated the JCS, while any notion of gradualism was anathema to the military Chiefs.

In November, shortly after the Taylor-Rostow mission, President Kennedy dispatched his close friend and Ambassador to India, John K. Galbraith, to Saigon. Ambassador Galbraith was not sanguine about the position of the Diem government. Galbraith's report preferred that "if the ARVN were well-deployed on behalf of an effective government it should be obvious that the Viet Cong would have no chance of success or takeover."[48]

Scarcely a year later, an uneasy President asked his old friend and majority leader, Senator Mansfield, to go to Vietnam. Like JFK, Mansfield had been a Diem supporter; however, the Senate leader returned as a changed man. His assessment was "brutally frank". Despite seven years and over two billion U.S. dollars spent, "substantially the same difficulties remain if, indeed, they have not been compounded." His recommendations included

> a careful reassessment of American interests in Southeast Asia to avoid a deeper U.S. involvement in Vietnam, where the primary responsibility rests with the South Vietnamese themselves. He warned: it is their country, their future that is at stake, not ours.[49]

Indeed, General Collin's 1955 view that Diem was "hopeless" was now being acknowledged by the President's close friends. Despite this advice, JFK remained steadfast. Like President

Eisenhower before him, JFK was averse to alienating his advisors. Committed to his policy aims, although not prepared to commit U.S. combat divisions, the President acted upon Taylor's proposals. Thus he was reinforcing the gradual increase in U.S. military involvement which had begun under President Truman, with one important difference. JFK looked for a specific military instrument which could fulfill his strategic policy aim of counterinsurgency.

Kennedy's enthusiasm for counterinsurgency warfighting was not well-received by the armed forces, particularly the army. The President called for "a wholly different kind of force, and... wholly different kind of military training... for a new kind of threat which conventional...[forces] weren't ready to fight."[30] In the face of this, the JCS believed that the President "was oversold" on the counterinsurgency idea, that "any good soldier can handle guerrillas," and "that the essence of the Vietnam problem is military."[31] This attitude was reinforced in the U.S. MAAG.

In Vietnam, Kennedy's dogmatic adherance to strategic policy coupled with the army's dogmatic adherance to conventional operations resulted in chaos. Throughout 1961, as JFK's new administration was coming in, Diem played off British counterinsurgency experts against the MAAG. In January 1962, Diem implemented his Strategic Hamlets program. The intent of this program was the successive destruction of VC infrastructure and stabilization of pro-govern-

ment elements in the hamlets.[52] MACV supported this so long as ARVN could still conduct "offensive operations...to destroy VC forces." "Pacification" was "less important to counterinsurgency operations than searching for and destroying guerrilla forces and base areas."[53]

Beginning in November 1961 and independently of MACV, U.S. Army Special Forces elements, under the auspices of the CIA's Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) program, initiated secondary, unconventional warfare operations in an interior province. The tactics used by the SF teams, with the support of the inhabitants of Darlac province, successfully applied the "oil spot" counterinsurgency method. By the end of 1962, the province was secure; however, in MACV, there was no comprehension of this success. What MACV did understand was that U.S. soldiers were working for the CIA in ever increasing numbers. The anxiety this caused resulted in MACV assuming control and rapidly expanding the CIDG program. The expansion did not follow the "oil spot" counterinsurgent pattern of "mutually supportive village defense systems," rather it focused on "offensive operations and...border surveillance."[54] MACV refocused SF operations so that detachments occupied widely dispersed border cordon posts to prevent infiltration and resupply from the north. By November 1963, the success which had been achieved was crumbling. Once again, the army showed itself unclear about the protracted insurgent nature of the war.[55]

These examples show that during the Kennedy years, the linkage between the strategic policy aim of defeating communism and the operational objectives which army commanders chose to achieve those aims was tenuous at best. The U.S. Army contributed to this failure by not understanding the nature of insurgency war. Rather, the senior military leaders persisted in their belief that the foremost threat was a conventional invasion from the north. How did the Kennedy administration address their evident lack of success? The answer proved to become the diplomatic nadir of his presidency and embroiled the U.S. deeper into this quagmire.

U.S. policy had supported Diem from 1955 despite increasing evidence that his influence in the nation was ever decreasing. Regardless of sage counsel from close personal advisors, JFK was not prepared to accept the fall of South Vietnam to communism and American prestige with it. In fact, JFK was determined to make Vietnam successful, in spite of Diem. The overthrow of South Vietnamese President Diem became "de facto" U.S. policy after August 1963. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge's demand for support in overthrowing Diem was cabled to JFK on 29 August 1963. Its verbage and tone captures the essence of U.S. strategic dogma:

> We are launched on a course from which there is no respectable turning back: the overthrow of the Diem government. U.S. prestige is...publicly committed to this end,...and will become more so as the facts leak out. In a more fundamental sense, there is no turning back because there is no possibility...that the war can be won under a Diem administration.[56]

The coup plunged South Vietnam into increasing political chaos. Complicated by JFK's assassination three weeks afterward, U.S. strategic policy in South Vietnam became inextricably locked in concrete. As the new U.S. President, Lyndon Johnson soon made it clear that "In Vietnam...Let no one doubt...that we have the resources and the will...as long as it may take...we will [not] be worn down, nor...driven out."[57] How would JFK's successor reassess the American "stake" in Vietnam and could the U.S. military deduce clearly defined operational objectives to achieve strategic aims?

Early in 1964, two National Security Action Memorandums (NSAMs 273 and 288) reaffirmed LBJ's commitment to an independent, non-communist republic.[58] In light of the U.S.'s deliberate, covert participation in staging the Diem coup, LBJ clearly felt the weight of moral responsibility to South Vietnam, as alluded in ambassador Lodge's cable. Yet LBJ dissembled throughout 1964, and as he looked towards reelection in November, events in Southeast Asia outpaced American decision cycles.[59]

In early August two U.S. navy destroyers on electronic warfare patrol were attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats. Within days, the U.S. Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf resolution which granted LBJ wide military flexibility in Vietnam. The President aggressively had sought this symbolic Congressional support. In all of Congress, only two senators opposed the resolution.[60] Coupled with his crushing victory

at the polls in November, LBJ was spoiling for a fight with the communists. However, despite his determination to prevent the communist takeover of the south, LBJ and his senior advisors had not yet clarified the military conditions which would achieve the political aim.

In late November, 1964, the NSC principals met for LBJ's decision regarding the appropriate U.S. response to early November VC attacks on U.S. installations in South Vietnam. LBJ rejected the JCS recommendation for a massive, sustained air campaign against the north. Rather he accepted a "Suggested Scenario for Controlled Escalation," which consisted, in early 1965, of two closely managed air operations, "Barrel Roll" and "Rolling Thunder."[61] LBJ was loath to quit, but neither did he want to brutally escalate the war.[62] The effect of this acceptance was to insure "the piecemeal application of airpower which lacked...mass, surprise, consistency, and sustained..." purpose.[63] Once again, the U.S. leadership demonstrated its inability to accept the insurgent nature of the war, or the conditions which would achieve the strategic aim.

The period from March to July 1965 demonstrates a similar shortfall in linking operational objectives to military end-state conditions which would achieve the strategic aim. In early March, LBJ upbraided the Army Chief General H.K. Johnson with an unceremonious demand for him to "go get some answers" about winning the war.[64] The Army Chief's trip to

Vietnam left him even less sanguine about the prospects for victory. The heart of his trip report was a question which attacked the core of U.S. strategic policy. He wrote:

> a policy determination must be made in the very near future that will assure the question: What should the Vietnamese be expected to do for themselves and how much more must the U.S. contribute directly to the security of South Vietnam?[65]

The Secretary of Defense's curt answer was scrawled at the bottom of General Johnson's memo: "Policy is: anything that will strengthen the GVN will be sent."[66] McNamara understood LBJ's intention to beat the communists in Vietnam.

Late this same month, General Westmoreland submitted his estimate of the Vietnamese situation. The MACV commander deduced that he would be able to exhaust the North Vietnamese and convince them to cease their support of the insurgency in the south. He believed that "...air strikes against NVN will, in time, bring about desired results."[67] These "desired results" were the cessation of insurgency support and, "hopefully," insurgency operations. Tied to this was Westmoreland's request for several more battalions. Meanwhile, Ambassador Taylor had seen the political abyss in South Vietnam, and now was opposing the direct involvement of U.S. ground forces. Likewise, the CIA director argued that the U.S. would get stuck "in a war it could not win."[68]

Similarly, domestic pressures were mounting upon LBJ. Senators Church and McGovern were opposed, and Senator

Fulbright, chairman of the foreign relations committee, who was so key in the passage of the Tonkin Gulf resolution advised "that a 'massive ground and air war'...would be a 'disaster' for the U.S."[69] In spite of the groundswell opposing deeper commitment, LBJ was determined:

> not...to...run out on Vietnam...the church is on fire over there, and we've got to find a way out ...there's nobody over there to negotiate with... the only thing...to do is to hang on. And that's what I'm going to do.[70]

Clearly, LBJ was determined to stay on his policy course.

In early May, General Westmoreland provided his campaign plan for operations to Secretary McNamara and the JCS. It envisioned the exhaustion of the enemy through large scale search and destroy operations which would defeat the VC and reclaim provincial territories to the GVN. In time, these operations would "demonstrate VC failure in the south... [and] break the will of the DRV/VC by denying them victory."[71] This would accomplish the aim of a campaign of exhaustion--to bring the enemy to the negotiating table.

One month later, the MACV commander submitted his request for forty-four battalions for his operations. Within a week, LBJ had acceeded to General Westmoreland's request and gave the guidance that U.S. operations should offer "the maximum protection at the least cost" and that the "war must be conducted without going all out."[72] By early June, 1965, the 173rd Airborne Brigade had been on the ground in Vietnam for over a month, making it more likely that direct combat with

U.S. Army forces was imminent.[73]

In July, General Westmoreland called for a force level of 200,000 men with which to prosecute operations.[74] Previously, the JCS had accepted Army Chief General Johnson's position, that the war could not be won without reserve mobilization. They remained aghast at the prospects of limited war, so continued to pressure the Defense Secretary for full mobilization. He agreed to support both General Westmoreland's request and the JCS position to the President.[75] On the 22nd, the NSC met, yet again, to come to grips with the mobilization issue. As this meeting adjourned, LBJ had "left the distinct impression" upon the JCS "that he had decided to mobilize the nation for war."[76] The JCS was satisfied that the President's mobilization would assure support for the war, as well as the means to fight, win, and get out. Warning orders were issued to the 1st Cavalry Division for deployment to Vietnam. However, that very weekend LBJ met privately at Camp David, with Secretary McNamara, Clark Clifford and Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg. Both Clifford and Goldberg were steadfastly opposed to mobilization, which was tantamount to a declaration of war. LBJ returned from Camp David opposed to mobilization.[77] In announcing his decision not to mobilize, but to approve General Westmoreland's force level request, LBJ committed American soldiers to a gradually escalating, limited war. Ten years and 58,000 lives later, the "last" American

officials were lifted from the U.S. embassy roof and departed Vietnam. How does this case study illustrate the conclusions drawn from theory and doctrine?

In spite of the consistent strategic policy over four administrations, the U.S. did not do the really "hard thinking" required to determine if a non-communist Indochina was truly a vital national interest.[7a] The ever-increasing number of prominent Americans opposing Vietnam policy, even before August, 1965, is sufficient to cast doubt upon U.S. aims in Indochina. Therefore, it remains doubtful that the U.S. fulfilled the first essential part to the "far-reaching act of judgment" and former Secretary Weinberger's first tenet. A non-communist Vietnam may not have been a vital national interest.

The U.S. did not understand the protracted insurgency nature of the war. Therefore, it failed to fulfill the second essential part to the "far-reaching act of judgment"--determining how the U.S. would conduct the war before engaging in it. This failure to link the strategic aim with operational objectives is also a failure to meet the third tenet outlined by Weinberger. No political or senior military officials could define achieveable military objectives which would attain the strategic aim.

The U.S. regularly re-assessed its objectives in Vietnam with relation to the forces and resources required. However, the effect of these assessments was the gradual escalation

of U.S. men and materiel. This lead to the piecemealed incoherence of operational plans and actions. The previous failures outlined above could not be redeemed by gradual escalation in an effort to attrit a mis-understood enemy. Simply put, the force brought against the VC insurgency was not decisive.

The Tonkin Gulf resolution and a landslide victory in the 1964 presidential elections appeared to constitute both congressional and public support for the war. Indeed, had the U.S. succeeded there would not be much to discuss, but there was much hard work done behind that facade of support. First and foremost, the Tonkin Gulf resolution was a legislative referendum on the defense of U.S. national "honor." Secondly, it was the result of an incumbent president's desire to appear decisive amidst an election campaign. In 1964, only two members of congress would oppose the president. Regarding the presidential elections, one may view LBJ as a liar for pledging "that we are not about to send American boys...to do what Asian boys ought to...for themselves."[73] At a minimum, American popular support is always conditional. The U.S. failure to link strategic aims with achieveable operational objectives merely assured that the foundation of popular support was built upon sand.

Lastly, the gradual escalation of this war insured that U.S. forces were in harm's way long before they were "the last resort." The responsibility for training and equipping

ARVN by the Eisenhower Administration set the conditions for this. The large increase in advisor strength after the 1961 Taylor-Rostow visit virtually guaranteed it.

In conclusion, this example--the first fifteen years of the U.S. experience in Vietnam--offers the military campaign planner "fertile" ground. It is illustrative of how military forces may become enmeshed when "hard thinking" and "critical analysis" fail to predominate at the operational and strategic levels of war.

Turning to more recent events, it has been widely accepted by most objective observers that the U.S. has learned from its Vietnam experience. These observers view the fulfillment of the "Weinberger Manifesto" in Panama and the Persian Gulf as having set the conditions for victory.[**] But do these examples show that we really have learned the lessons of Vietnam completely?

To answer this question, I shall now examine the national crisis colloquially known as the "war on drugs." I intend to assess the U.S. conduct of this "war" to determine if it has set the conditions which will increase the probability of success.

SECTION IV. THE "WAR ON DRUGS"

In his nearly inimitable fashion, former President Reagan declared "war on drugs" in the early 1980's. The expansion of narco-trafficking into the U.S. to satisfy the apparently

insatiable demand of U.S. narcotic consumers seemed almost insurmountable. Pollsters and pundits alike elevated the drug scourge into the public consciousness, which quickly became a clarion call for decisive governmental action.[41]

Through the first half of the decade, the Reagan Administration obtained authorization for budget increases to fight the drug plague. Most of the increase, almost 4 billion dollars by the end of his presidency, resulted from the passage of succeeding pieces of legislation--the "Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988."[42] These legislative acts required increased U.S. military cooperation and support to U.S. law enforcement agencies (LEAs) for this war. These Acts also reflected the groundswell of Congressional support to militarize the war on drugs. Both the President and Congress accepted the notion that going after drugs at their source would be an effective way to reduce the scourge.[43] However, governmental actions for which this legislation appropriated funds had yet to be linked to a unified stategy for fighting this war.

President Bush first unveiled his unifying "National Drug Control Strategy" (NDCS) to the nation in September 1989. Subsequently, this has been followed by annual update, "companion" NDCS editions. The strategic aim of the NDCS was first articulated by the President in his 1990 NDCS cover letter. Here the President stated his principal goal of reducing "the level of illegal drug use in America."[44] Pre-

viously the 1989 NDCS had declared that "Drugs are a major threat to our national security."[45] The 1991 NDCS document continued this characterization.[46] Each edition of the NDCS has called for comprehensive measures to "exert pressure on all parts of this problem simultaneously," because "no single tactic...alone...can work."[47] Since its inception, the NDCS has highlighted the U.S. Government's strategic aim; it also provides the linkage between that aim and the operational objectives which will lead to victory in this war.

Articulated in the introductory chapter of the 1991 NDCS are four operational goals which, when met, are supposed to attain the President's strategic aim. These are:

1. to restore order and security to American neighborhoods;
2. to dismantle drug trafficking organizations;
3. to help people break the habit of drug use; and
4. to prevent those who have never used illegal drugs from starting.[48]

In order to measure the effectiveness of these broad goals, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has devised "nine detailed goals and objectives, all with specific and proportional targets."[49] The nine measures are:

1. current overall drug use,
2. current adolescent drug use,
3. occassional cocaine use,
4. frequent cocaine use,
5. current adolescent cocaine use,
6. drug-related medical emergencies,
7. drug availability,
8. domestic marijuana production,
9. student attitudes towards drug use.[50]

These nine statistical measures of effectiveness (MOEs)

are crucial to the analysis of victory in the war on drugs. Of the nine MOEs, two--drug availability and domestic marijuana production--relate to the supply-side of this war. The NDCS declares that the evidence is "not yet available" to evaluate the results in these two categories, yet close to seventy percent of counternarcotics funding is focused on them.[21] This is the "supply-side" of the war, in which the DOD plays the lead role for detection and interdiction, and which dominates the national debate.

Recent army doctrine introduces Clausewitz' "center of gravity" as a concept that is supposed to aid military planning. This concept assists planners in focusing their resources on that which will attain the strategic aim. It is a concept which was notably absent during the Vietnam era. Theoretically, this is an improvement.

In developing campaigns (or major operations) in a joint and interagency environment, U.S. efforts should be oriented upon the defeat of the enemy center of gravity. As the "hub of all power and movement," the center of gravity is crucial to the enemy's survival.[22] In theory,

> the ultimate substance of enemy strength must be traced back to the fewest possible sources, and ideally to one alone. The attacks on these sources must be compressed into the fewest possible actions--again, ideally, into one. Finally, all minor actions must be subordinated as much as possible.[23]

Thus, if the U.S. is successful in attacking the center of gravity, then it becomes more probable that the enemy

will suffer defeat. However, identifying the center of gravity in this war may not have aided in focusing the limited assets available for prosecution. Let us examine the "center of gravity" concept as strategists have applied it to the war on drugs.

The 1991 NDCS incorrectly identified "that a point where the drug trade is most susceptible to...disruptions is its organizational center of gravity--the traffickers' home country base of operations."[94] The document further outlined that:

> [in the] dismantling of major drug trafficking organizations...we must...be certain that we are attacking the heart...not just its extremities. Final success depends upon identifying and destroying critical parts of the organization that are most vulnerable: key personnel, communications, transportation, finances,...supplies and equipment."[95]

A similar view of the center of gravity in counternarcotics is offered by the Strategic Studies Institute.[96] This view seems to espouse attacking every element of the trafficking network because the six item list is all-inclusive. No part of the narco-trafficking system is suggested to be more critical--"the ultimate source of enemy strength"--than another.[97] This "full court press"-like view of counternarcotics operations remains consonant with the NDCS's position that this war must exert constant pressure on every part of the illicit drug system. This approach, however, seems to contribute to confusion rather than clarification of the

center of gravity. An example will illuminate this confusion.

In 1986, the DEA, in cooperation with U.S. forces and the Bolivian Government, participated in Operation "Blast Furnace." This was a five month "search and destroy" operation to eradicate cocaine production and disrupt distribution from that country. "Blast Furnace" succeeded in disrupting Bolivian narco-trafficking operations, but failed to demonstrate that production labs or coca supplies are centers of gravity. There remains no evidence to suggest that "Blast Furnace" had any impact upon the domestic U.S. cocaine market.[28] A lesson from "Blast Furnace" should have been that neither production and processing labs, nor coca supplies are centers of gravity. Additionally, the economic malaise caused by this operation greatly embittered local Bolivians towards both their government and that of the U.S. If success in the drug war results from concentrating the effects of combat power at production labs and coca supply points to compel the enemy to do our will, then "Blast Furnace" was an abject failure.[29]

Other indications of the incorrect identification of the center of gravity in this war abound. Success in the late 1989 effort to shut down Columbia's narco-trafficking was shortlived; within six months of the operation's end, Columbian production had recovered to eighty percent of its previous level. Narco-traffickers simply had moved or shut down

operations to wait it out.[100] From 1988 to 1990, the DEA estimated a two hundred and fifty percent increase of annual cocaine production in Latin America.[101] During this same timeframe, the U.S. State Department's Inspector General concluded "that U.S. efforts in the Andes 'have had little impact on the availability of illicit narcotics in the United States.'"[102] These indices of failure reinforce my belief that U.S. resources allocated to fight this war in the Andes cannot unbalance the enemy's center of gravity. Indeed, one must look elsewhere to find the center of gravity in the war on drugs.

In his 1990 monograph, OCONUS Counternarcotic Campaign Planning, Major Jim Harris made this prescient observation:

> With the extraordinary power of high demand coming from outside the theater, attacking the infrastructure and production of drugs at the source is the most direct, but also a short-term solution. Regeneration of any part of the infrastructure is assured as long as the demand exists.[103]

The allusions to "extraordinary power of demand" and "regeneration ...of...infrastructure" identify the center of gravity. The "ultimate source of enemy strength and power" is the seeming insatiable domestic U.S. demand, coupled with the enormous financial strength reaped from it. Attrition of Andean narco-trafficking infrastructure has not and will not dismantle the cartels. Why? Because the "ultimate substance of [their] strength" is demand, not plants. The war in the Andean Ridge is not focused against the enemy center of

gravity; it may be fought against a vulnerability or weak point in the narco-industry, but it is not aiming at the center of gravity.

Conducting this style of war may only produce the wastage of limited U.S. resources. As the 1991 NDCS admits, the evidence does not demonstrate any significant reduction of drug availability, despite the allocation of nearly seventy percent of U.S. drug war dollars. In contravention of its own strategy, U.S. actions are not weighted against the "heart" of this issue, but against "extremities."[104]

Despite this reality, the U.S. continues to militarize the "war" on drugs. Currently, DOD activity remains highly visible to the U.S. public. There is also an ever present tension among U.S. advisors in Latin America to "take charge" of operations in order to accomplish the counterdrug mission. That "take charge" mind set is part of the American "warrior ethos" which can become manifest among advisors "in country."[105] Where will this lead us to in the near future?

The U.S. Military has steadfastly held its ground against expanding its leadership role in this war on drugs. Yet, there may be highly placed government officials who believe that a unified military command could develop "a military-style battle plan which would help the administration wage a more effective campaign."[106] This same article anonymously quoted "a senior administration official" as saying,"I do not understand why...[the U.S. Military] can't act a little

more forward-looking."[107] The answer to this official's lack of understanding can be found by some hard thinking about the objective conditions of this conflict, and a review of the Weinberger Doctrine.

First, there is no question that illicit drugs pose a debilitating threat to the fabric of American society. Thus the NDCS's strategic aim of reducing "illegal drug use in America" meets the requirement of being a vital national interest and satisfies the guidance of Weinberger's first tenet.[108] However, the nature of the operational objectives that, so far, have governed the war in the Andean Ridge are not adequately chosen. That is, attacks against narco-trafficking infrastructure--communications, transportation, production, and growth--have not contributed to the destruction of the "enemy" center of gravity. The inability to define militarily significant objectives, that is, objectives which directly contribute to achieving the strategic aim--the reduction of drug use--results in a breakdown of Clausewitz' cornerstone admonition requiring "the most far-reaching act of judgment" by political and military leaders.[109] While the strategic aim is clear, there appears to be a de-coupling between that aim and the selection of the operational objectives which, when accomplished, are supposed to attain that aim. With 70% of the resources allocated against 25% of the objectives, the preponderance of U.S. resources are focused against "extremities." The "heart" of the problem beats on

unabated; the center of gravity is unaffected, and former Secretary Weinberger's third tenet is unfulfilled.

The U.S. regularly re-assesses its commitment of resources to the war on drugs. The NDCS is produced annually, as are budget appropriations for the war. Thus far, the assessments have lead to the gradual escalation of support provided to Andean nations, with ineffective results. In short, the application of U.S. resources in the drug war has not been decisive.

American popular support appears to back the President in the drug war. Many Americans believe that drug use and the narcotics trade are a blight upon the nation. These same people accept the overseas actions taken by the U.S. Government in this issue--to include the recent military operation and resultant conviction of Panama's Manuel Noriega. Congress has reflected its willingness to support the overseas effort as well. So long as the war remains limited and the expenditure of resources relatively small, it is likely that public support will be retained. However, as this war wears on, and especially if increasing numbers of U.S. servicemen or members of other U.S. agencies are killed in counter-narcotic's operations whose objectives will not lead to reduced drug use in the U.S., then the American public will do some hard thinking, thinking that military and political leaders should be doing now.

Lastly, events assure that U.S. forces are in harm's way

long before they might be the last resort. The probability of U.S. forces involvement, by design or by accident, has already been demonstrated. First, the U.S. provided the UH-60 helicopters and a company-sized unit to support Operation "Blast Furnace" in 1986.[110] Second, an American aircrewman was lost and presumed dead after the C-130 in which he served was attacked by two Peruvian Air Force jets over international waters on 24 April 1992. His plane was reported to be on a counternarcotic's mission.[111] American servicemen and women continue their support of Andean and U.S. Law Enforcement Agencies in the drug war.

SECTION V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this monograph has been to systematically examine the validity of the comparison between the war on drugs and the Vietnam War. While not analagous in every respect, the dissection of U.S. strategic aims and operational actions as well as the Weinberger Doctrine has provided the framework for this task. From this study of each case, there does appear to be firm ground for a valid comparison.

First, in each case the strategic aim was clearly articulated and essentially consistent for the duration of the the conflict (the drug war is ongoing). The U.S. strategic aim in Vietnam was to defeat monolithic communism by sustaining an independent, non-communist republic in South Vietnam. In

the war on drugs, the President has stated the strategic aim of significantly reduced illegal drug use in the U.S. This is the first cornerstone in the "far-reaching act of judgment" by national leaders bent on waging war.

The second cornerstone of this judgment is a clear understanding by the nation's leaders about how the war will be conducted. Vietnam offers a stark example of how the de-coupling of the linkage between strategic and operational levels of war results in a malaise for the military and the nation. Similarly, the war on drugs appears to be focusing the vast preponderance of resources against operationally insignificant objectives.

The comparison remains valid from the perspective of former Secretary of Defense Weinberger's doctrine, as well. Each case presented an acknowledged vital national interest, in accord with the first tenet. However, in both Vietnam and the drug war, a clear political aim has not been translated into militarily achieveable operational objectives, a violation of tenet three. This alone provides a sound basis for caution by military leaders interacting at the strategic and operational levels of war. When an operational objective has no demonstrable effect on achieving the strategic aim, then it is impossible to determine the size and composition of a force sufficient to bring victory. In Vietnam, American forces moved ever so incrementally from their support and advisory role to that of the main effort. In the war on

drugs, U.S. military forces are still in a support role, but their first casualty has been counted. It could be a slippery slope should U.S. political leaders fail to acknowledge the nature of this war and insist on a larger, more direct U.S. military role.

Lastly, American popular support remains essential, yet always conditional. In Vietnam, the American public and its elected representatives supported the strategic aim. However, such support fell away rapidly, when it became clear, albeit too late, that the focus of the war effort would not gain victory. Similarly, direct U.S. military action in the Andean nations has been ineffective in achieving the U.S. strategic aim of reduced drug use in America. Any effort by U.S. policy-makers to escalate the direct involvement of U.S. forces in a drug war where their employment could not be decisive places at risk American popular support. However, there may still be too many high government officials who might be willing to plunge their armed forces into a deeper malaise.

The implications of this comparative study for the conduct of the war on drugs are twofold. First, the U.S. military's support role is not directed against the center of gravity--domestic demand--nor should it be. American armed forces are ill-suited for such a task. However, one must understand that the U.S. military, in support of other government and allied agencies, is conducting a campaign of

exhaustion against narco-trafficking organizations, without much effect. In short, the resources being expended by the U.S. Government to fight this war in the Andean Region will not be decisive.

Second, the U.S. NDCS is not properly weighting what should be its main operational effort against the "enemy" center of gravity--domestic demand. Only two of the NDCS's operational objectives address this demand. There seems to be a prevailing line of thought that the "demand" problem may be isolated and addressed through "a domestic policy of treatment, education, and urban development."[11:8] However, such a limited view completely ignores the demand which may exist in corporate America, the entertainment industry, and professional athletics, to name but a few. High profile drug use may not be in vogue, but the billions of dollars reaped by narco-traffickers cannot spring largely from U.S. ghettos. The NDCS will not succeed until this U.S. Government, its institutions and society at large, are resolved to attack the center of gravity--domestic demand. Until then, the U.S. military is fortunate to have leaders who remain steadfastly opposed to a greater military role in this malaise called the war on drugs.

ENDNOTES

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[64]Perry, 148.

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[107]Jehl and Ostrow, A-1.

[108]Bush, 1990 NDCS, cover letter.

[109]Clausewitz, 88.

[110]Fishel, 61.

[111]Kansas City Star article, 25 April 1992, A-1.

[112]Andreas, et al, 128; a similar perception to that articulated by Andreas, et al, was offered by an AMSP guest speaker from the NSC in late April 1992.

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